

## *Caring-With* Dialogic Sculptures. A Post-Disciplinary Investigation into Forms of *Attachment*\*

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### Abstract

The 'art practice as research as art' discussed set out to investigate through dialogic art how identity formation is linked with micro-social experiences and place. The project "Seeds of Attachment" by Elena Cogni is centered around a newly developed non-verbal strategy in the form of a sculptural prop, informed by psychologist Margaret Lowenfeld's "Mosaic Test" (1938-1954), and discussed in relation to historical precedents in socially engaged art. The activation of the prop during encounters with 'mothers' on the school-run route, aimed at offering a context for an understanding of how their attachment to their children influenced the development of an attachment to place. This relational approach is defined as *caring with*, and underpinned by care ethics and ecofeminism. The implications of the adopted non-verbal dialogic artistic approach are considered in relation to new forms of gendered spatial practices to research on place, including *affordances* of place, and how these might lead to future post-disciplinary research.

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La 'pratica dell'arte come ricerca come arte' si propone di indagare attraverso l'arte dialogica come la formazione dell'identità sia collegata a esperienze di tipo micro-sociale e legate al luogo. Il progetto "Seeds of Attachment" di Elena Cogni è incentrato su una strategia non verbale attraverso l'adozione di una scultura-strumento, ispirato dai principi del "Mosaic Test" della psicologa Margaret Lowenfeld (1938-1954), e discusso in relazione ai precedenti storici in ambito di arte sociale. L'attivazione della scultura durante gli incontri con 'madri' lungo il percorso casa-scuola, mirava a offrire un contesto per comprendere come il loro attaccamento ai figli abbia influenzato lo sviluppo di un attaccamento al luogo. Questo approccio relazionale è definito *caring with* - *prendersi cura con* e sostenuto dall'etica della cura e dall'ecofemminismo. Le implicazioni dell'approccio artistico dialogico non verbale sono prese in considerazione in relazione alle nuove forme di *spatial practices* di genere per la ricerca sul luogo, a includere le *affordances* del luogo e come queste potrebbero portare ad una futura ricerca post-disciplinare.

**Keywords:** care; artistic research; theory of attachment; place attachment; dialogic; ecology; ecofeminism; sculpture; art; psychology.

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## Elena Cologni's Art as Research as Art approach in context

by Caterina Albano<sup>1</sup>

Artistic practices whether in the fields of visual or performing arts are still perceived as an outpour of individual expression. Such bias undermines the formal, conceptual and critical reflection that underpins them. At the same time, the claim to knowledge and authority of science – though long-debated<sup>2</sup> – clouds the crucial role of the arts in the contemporary production of knowledge. This raises questions around the role and significance of the arts in society, what can be regarded as knowledge, what are acceptable forms of knowledge at any given time and within different cultures, and what are its forms of articulations. While an attempt to answer those questions is beyond the scope of this brief introduction, Elena Cologni's project, *Seeds of Attachment* (2016-18), offers us an opportunity for some brief considerations on the potential of artistic practices of being generative of knowledge – aesthetic knowledge, emotional knowledge, critical knowledge and, as Cologni demonstrates, ethical knowledge – thus pointing to the broader social and political significance of such practices. Hence, what does it mean to think of art as research and research as art?

At a basic level, in any historical period and across cultures, art is a formal investigation within specific artistic genres that deals with individual, social and/or political issues. Whether this investigation concerns the articulation or production of sound and its compositional construction, physical movement or the visual rendering of shapes or their spatial and temporal relations, art is already research. A visual artist might engage with formal questions around the rendering of a three dimensional body on a two dimensional surface, a choreographer with questions around the kinetic negotiation of space: their solutions are more than aesthetically pleasing and emotionally compelling, they are the result of research as 'the careful study of a subject' (*OED*). However, in regarding artistic practices as research, we refer to more complex and articulated investigations that entail different methodologies that intersect other disciplines and their approaches – archival research, as in the case of *Seeds of Attachment*, field work, observation, collection and analysis of data, and experimentation with materials. This goes hand in hand with a reflection within disciplinary contexts that include artistic practices but also other fields of research, as for instance, in our specific case, anthropology, geography, psychology and critical theory. Cologni applies a formal and material understand-

1. Caterina Albano is Reader in Visual Culture and Science Central Saint Martins - University of the Arts London.
2. Hacking I. (1983). *Representing and Intervening: Introductory Topics in the Philosophy of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Latour B. (1999). *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press); Lenoir T. (1997). *Instituting Science: The Cultural Production of Scientific Disciplines* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press); Pickering A. (2008). "New Ontologies." In Pickering A. and Guzik K. (eds). *The Mangle in Practice: Science, Society and Becoming*. Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-14; Shapin S. (2010). *Never Pure: Historical Studies of Science as if It Was Produced by People with Bodies, Situated in Time, Space, Culture and Society, and Struggling for Credibility and Authority*. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press.

ing to Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* (1938-54) that becomes the starting point for an investigation whose methods resonate with those of psychology and whose reflection engages with ethics as much as with aesthetics through a discussion that, as her article shows, encompasses other artists' work and diverse disciplinary contributions. This is itself the product of research into a subject and of critical engagement with it, from which insight is gleaned in an original synthesis.

In regarding art practices as research, we do not, however, suggest that they are subsidiary forms of historical, psychological, sociological or other kinds of investigation, but rather that artistic approaches to history, psychology or other subjects are equally generative of knowledge and reflection. It is not unusual that artists' collaborations with experts in other disciplines lead to advances in those fields through their approach, design of methodologies or analysis. Art practices, in other words, are in themselves a process of investigation that it is embedded in specific artistic contexts by relating to other artists' work, and draws on other disciplines and critical contexts to engage with topical questions, social issues and, as for Cologni, psychological processes. As her article testifies, this research generates psychological insight into attachment and outputs include academic papers or journal articles. But this research is also art. While the documentation of the work in artistic practices is as scrupulous as in scientific experiments, the final result is a body of work. For artistic practices the crucial articulation of the research that an artist has carried out and the knowledge that such research produces are artworks. The pliable shapes that Cologni has developed from Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* and used with the participants to her project are sculptures. They are not a copy of the shapes in the test but rather a response on which aesthetic choices (the introduction of a semi-circular shape absent from Lowenfeld, size, elastic material etc...) reflect formal, conceptual and emotional considerations. Participants responds to such choices with their engagement to the work and the mutual interaction of the artist and participants translates in series of drawings. Unlike more traditional academic outcomes, and more radically, such knowledge does not remain within the confines of disciplinary expertise, but engages audiences: it is shared knowledge that generates further reflection and engagement from the part of the viewer.

## Introduction

Modern life involves changes of location, to a new village, town or country, nonetheless strong bonds with particular places endure. People's country of origin, city, or village in which they grew up, the house in which they lived, the schools they attended, all form essential components of our identity, underpinning feelings of belonging.<sup>3</sup> Equally, moving to a new place requires coming to terms with what has been left behind, to develop new bonds. These dynamics have implications on who we are and will become, because the ways in which one experiences place impacts one's own identity, and is central to for one's own wellbeing. This is today a widely shared condition as we witness the phenomenon of mass migration. However different might the underlying motives be, the effect of dynamics of attachment to (and separation from) one's own place is worth considering carefully, even if when this account will be read the COVID19 pandemic will have paused this movement of people for a while.

The multidisciplinary approach in the illustrated project *Seeds of Attachment* (SoA), was supported by, including: New Hall Art Collection, Murray Edwards College of the University of Cambridge, and the Freud Museum, in London (2016-18),<sup>4</sup> whereas the adopted research method was devised while in residence at the Margaret Lowenfeld Library (Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge). This led to developing a nomadic and dialogic sculpture, inspired by the Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test Box* (1938) and related book (1954), to be activated with participants in public places, and to be documented visually.

The dialogic approach underpins both the artistic strategy and the multidisciplinary research context, facilitating a web of relations through and around the project, as SoA, through encounters, aimed at opening up a debate on how one might develop place attachment,<sup>5</sup> in relation to the attachment between carer and child,<sup>6</sup> ultimately asking where home might be, and to find the results in non-verbal answers art might provide. The wider care ethics, psychological and artistic contexts for the research, the artistic methods adopted, and results are detailed below. This is driven by the believe that self-awareness of one's own relation to place, and loved ones at the heart of one's own

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3. Jack (2010).

4. Curator Jamie Reurs. It was also supported by Lowenfeld Library, Centre for Family Research University of Cambridge, Director Prof. Susan Golombok; New Hall Art Collection, Curator at the time Eliza Gluckman at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge; Eleanor Glanville, Research Centre, University of Lincoln; Dr. Robbie Duschinsky, Head of the Applied Social Science Group, University of Cambridge, who supported and advised on the scientific aspect of the project. Contributors also include: Susan Buckingham (feminist geographer), Jenny Bavidge (environmentalist, Cambridge University), Virginia Held (philosopher, New York City University), and of course the participants. It was supported by Art Language Location, Anglia Ruskin University. With funding from Grants for the Arts, Arts Council England (2016), and it won the first prize of "The Shape of the Public's Health," organised by Royal Society of Public Health and Royal Society of Sculptors (2019).

5. Seamon (2013); Degnen (2015).

6. Ainsworth, Bowlby (1965); Bowlby (1969, 1988); Freud A., Burlingham (1944); Jack (2010).

wellbeing, can be conveyed through art.

## 1. Research Contexts

The project evolved through an 'art as research as art' investigation defined by underpinning research from different contexts, which all contributed to the arising of the dialogic and situated approach embedded in the final body of work. These contexts, and modes of investigation are detailed below to include: dialogic art rooted in relational and ecological approaches; social engaged and psychology informed art, including Lydia Clark; studies on the theory of attachment and place attachment; and The Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test*.

### 1.1. Dialogue and Ecology in Art

The context discussed below attempts to identify the relational approach defined as caring-with adopted in SoA at the intersection between dialogic, ecological art, and spatial practices.

Contemporary dialogic,<sup>7</sup> relational,<sup>8</sup> and social engaged art,<sup>9</sup> and critical spatial practices<sup>10</sup> have their roots in site-specific arts (including Environmental Art/Land Art)<sup>11</sup> from the 60s and 70s. This context was part of anti-idealist and anti-commercial efforts, taking art out of the gallery, and the meaning of these works derived from the circulation and exchanges between art and site/places.<sup>12</sup> Today's social engaged art strategies according to Grant Kester<sup>13</sup> is characterised by a gradual movement away from object-based practices happening in the 60s and 70s, manifesting in an interest in interaction with the viewer, and a shift towards a durational experience,<sup>14</sup> and are of collaborative nature. They develop in dialogue with all parties involved: artist, curator, institution and community groups. Within this context the work is produced in, and through, dialogical exchange,<sup>15</sup> hence the more specific definition of dialogic art.

Artistic practices sharing a similar social mode of engagement, also encompass principles of: connectivity, ecological ethical responsibility, stewardship of inter-

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7. Kester (2004).

8. Bourriaud (2002).

9. Among the many publications: Thompson N. (2012). *Living as Form, Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

10. Rendell (2006).

11. A discussion on how these might overlap in Westin 2012.

12. Kaye (2000); Kwon (2002).

13. Kester (2004).

14. Ivi, pp. 13, 50.

15. Ivi, p. 4.

relationships and of commons, and can thus be discussed in terms of “ecological art.”<sup>16</sup>

Pioneer environmental artists included for example Nancy Holt<sup>17</sup> and Jo Hanson (1918-2007). In particular, Hanson’s political approach entailed a degree of interdisciplinarity, as she talks about the “inseparability of sociology and ecology,” and how at the time “anger and discontent expressed themselves in the gesture of trashing the streets-aided and abetted by the wind!”<sup>18</sup> However, it was only until the exhibition “Weather Report: Art & Climate Change” curated by Lucy Lippard<sup>19</sup> that a survey was done on ecology related art. This included artists whose take on ecology opened up the vocabulary for environmentalism,<sup>20</sup> to include relational, dialogic practice also addressing practices of care in society. The latter was the subject of the work of feminist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, which positions caring for others, and caring for the environmental at the core of the ecology driven debate. By challenging the domestic role of women, proclaimed herself a ‘maintenance artist,’ in the *Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition “CARE”*,<sup>21</sup> where, together with the ‘personal’ or household maintenance, she addressed ‘general,’ public and earth maintenance. A few years later the philosophical context for care ethics and ecofeminism would be on the rise, and although this is discussed later in the text, it is useful pointing out that it was such multifaceted approach that allowed important advancements. This context includes psychologist Carol Gilligan., educationist Nel Noddings, philosophers Virginia Held and Joan Tronto. Tronto and Berenice Fisher in particular have defined “taking care of” as an activity that includes “everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live in it as well as possible.” This is so relevant now at a social and environmental levels.<sup>22</sup>

## 1.2. Art and Psychology

In the art project SoA, dialogue is understood as a reciprocal way of caring, and adopted as a tool aimed at creating connections within communities, thus promoting healthy social relations, as care ethicist Virginia Held commented, when we met in 2019. This

16. See for example Kester (2008).

17. Holt’s *Sky Mound*, a proposal for reclaiming a 57 acre New Jersey landfill as a park/artwork and *Up and Under* which will transform a sand quarry in Finland, bringing it back to the people.

18. Hanson J. *My Adventures as an Eco Artist*: [<https://directory.weadartists.org/artist/hansonj>]; reprinted from the 2003 issue of *Land and Eco Art* in the USA.

19. Lippard while interviewed said: “The critics used to say that conceptual art brings in too much other stuff, too many ideas,” she said, but “I love the idea that art can become something that acts in the world.” [<https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/23/arts/design/23dede.html>] *Weather Report: Art & Climate Change*, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (September 14 - December 21 2007), and other partners was presented in collaboration with Eco Arts.

20. Some relevant concepts are found in Morton 2017.

21. *Maintenance Art Manifesto 1969! Proposal for an exhibition “CARE.”* [[https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles\\_MANIFESTO.pdf](https://www.queensmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Ukeles_MANIFESTO.pdf)].

22. Fisher, Tronto (1990); Tronto (1994).



form of dialogic art informed by a psychological strategy,<sup>23</sup> is later referred to as ‘caring-with.’

While the challenges, impact and possible implications of dialogic art in society have been discussed and recognised,<sup>24</sup> including in interdisciplinary contexts,<sup>25</sup> psychology-oriented methods in artistic research tend to be seen mostly related to therapeutic clinical practices.<sup>26</sup>

A historical example of such an approach is that of Lydia Clark (1920–1988), who developed her practice within the Brazilian art scene, which flourished under the dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 until 1985.<sup>27</sup> The artist developed a unique interdisciplinary language which was very inspirational for my research. The piece *Animals LC3* (1969)<sup>28</sup> below, part of the Collection of the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art in Norwich, UK (Fig. 1), was the starting point for a workshop I organized based on Clark’s ideas. In this in particular I compared her folding strategies (Fig. 2) with my previous relevant work<sup>29</sup> as a dialogic strategy.

Clark first created objects by fracturing the surfaces of her paintings, some of which required her participants to physically manipulate them, as an alternative model of the art object and experience, hugely influential on younger generations of artists. These experiments took her into the realm of therapy under the influence of psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott’s work. More specifically, Clark was interested in his theory of the “Transitional Object” in relation to the growing children’s attachment to their parents.<sup>30</sup> The ‘transitional object’ (T.O.), such as blankets, soft toys, and bits of cloth to which young children frequently develop intense, persistent attachments, were theorized by Winnicott as representing an essential phase of ego development leading to the establishment of a sense of self.<sup>31</sup> Clark’s later body of work operated specifically within the context of the therapeutic, and the relationship between these latter practices and her previous body of work is much debated.<sup>32</sup> However, what marks Clark’s art practice apart from psychoanalytic models, is her use of the so called “relational objects” (1976-82),<sup>33</sup> an interactive approach for the user already present in the previously mentioned series *Animals LC3*. Moreover, in her account Luciana Mourão Arslan (2017), discusses how

23. Lowenfeld (1954).

24. Bishop (2012); Hersey, Bobick (2016); Bonham-Carter, Mann (2017); Wexler, Sabbaghi (2019).

25. Camic (2008).

26. For example: Samson Kei Shun Wong (2019).

27. Calirman (2012).

28. Available online: [<https://scva.ac.uk/about/collections/abstract-and-constructivist-collection/lydia-clark-animals-lc3>].

29. Previous projects include: “Re-collect,” Oslo Kunstforenig (2003), “Mnemonic Present, Unfolding series,” various institutions (2004/06).

30. Winnicott (1953).

31. Litt (1986).

32. Best (2011).

33. Anagnost (2017).



Clark's fascinating art objects, depend on the participant's embodiments, "because they intend to access a bodily memory through pre-verbal and non-verbal experience."<sup>34</sup>

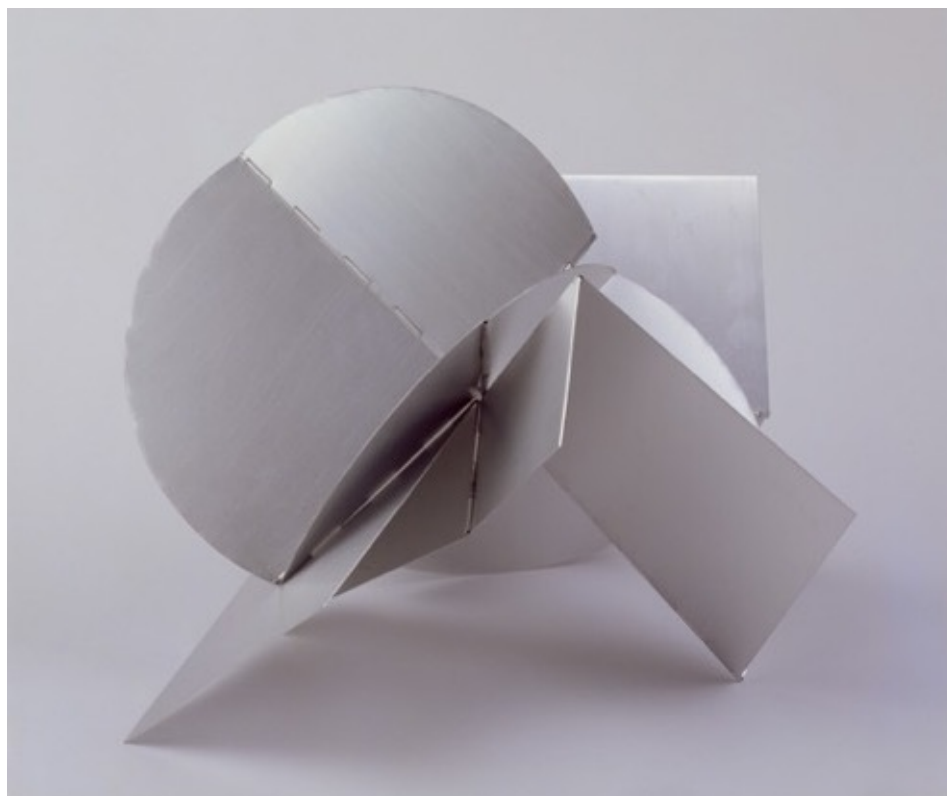


Fig. 1 – Lygia Clark, *Animals LC3* (metal). Courtesy The Sainsburys Centre for Visual Art, University of East Anglia Norwich, UK.

In the workshop, the interaction among participants took place through the manipulation of the created shapes, and manifested in the folding and unfolding of elements in the compositions: a sort of action-reaction pattern of movements similar to a non-verbal dialogue.

Non-verbal communication is also a very basic form of interaction we adopt in everyday circumstances, like walking down a street. For example, in the event of another person coming from the opposite direction, we know how to negotiate the use of space. By acknowledging the other, we may look at them, and adopt a slight shift in direction, so they may respond in a similar fashion. While body memory is, "memory intrinsic to the body, how we remember by and through the body,"<sup>35</sup> rather than what is remembered about the body, this kind of individually developed memory contributes to a wider social memory. This also contributes to building a sense of belonging to a

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34. Mourão Arslan (2017).

35. Casey (2009, p. 147).

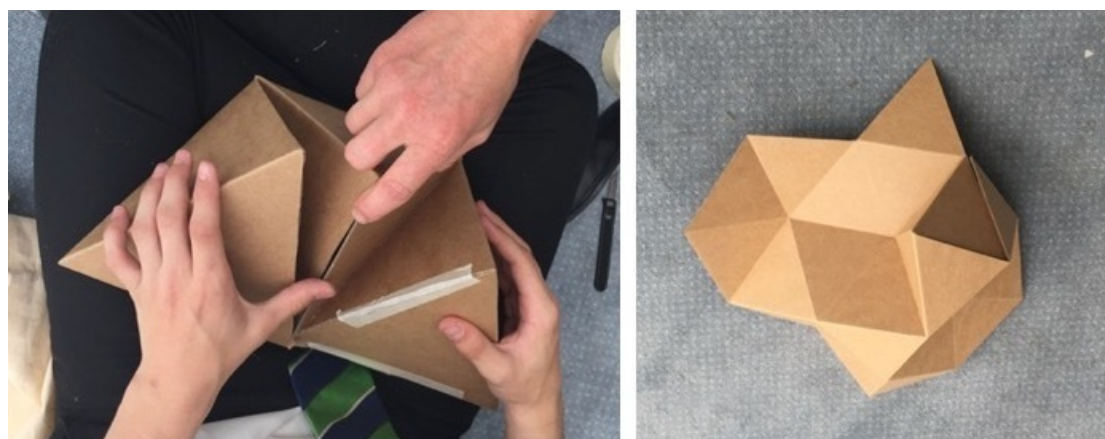


Fig. 2 – (a, b) Elena Cologni, from a Lydia Clark inspired collaborative folding workshop at The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Art, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

place and, conversely, how places are “themselves constituted by the different ways in which people belong to them.”<sup>36</sup>

This sort of embodied knowledge coming from body memory, accrues from previous experiences, like our earliest experience of non-verbal communication, as infants in relation to our parents, to include various kinds of interlocutions like the so-called “body talk,” crying, and eye contact. This all also has a significant role in building attachment to one another.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, in the project discussed below a non-verbal communication takes place, facilitated through the adopted prop.

### 1.3. Developing Attachment to Place and People

My interest in the social dimension of the experience of place as essential for the process for identity formation, was pursued in the project *SoA*. This was done by looking into a connection between the attachment of parent and child, the ‘theory of attachment,’<sup>38</sup> and the attachment to place.<sup>39</sup> Both of these are introduced below.

Such a connection between place and self is seen as ontological by philosopher Edward Casey, who states that “there is no place without self; and no self without place.”<sup>40</sup> Moreover, by building on Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical tradition, he indicates that ‘place is the immediate ambiance of the lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interests that com-

36. Edwards (1998, p. 148).

37. This takes place for example in breastfeeding, subject of one of my previous projects: “Mettere Ogni Significato Sotto-Sopra, Dietro-Davanti, Alto-Basso” (2006), in “Dissertare/Disertare,” curators Associazione START Gaia Cianfanelli & Caterina Iaquina at Centro Internazionale per l’Arte Contemporanea, Castello Colonna di Genazzano, Roma, June/September 2006.

38. Ainsworth (1979); Bowlby (1969); Freud A., Burlingham (1944).

39. Seamon (2013); Degnen (2015).

40. Casey (1997, p. 406).

pose one's own life-history." Self is used in terms of agency and identity of the geographical subject; body is what links the self to lived place. Thus, personal identity involves intrinsically an awareness of one's own place – a specifically geographical awareness<sup>41</sup> in the everyday. Place is also multidimensional, and made through a combination of materiality (roads, buildings, people, animals, waste, vehicles), meaning (personal, and social and communal) and practice (in their every-day).<sup>42</sup> These factors are continuously being negotiated, and make place complex, and relational, as work in human geography has made evident.<sup>43</sup>

Within this context, attachment to place is normally understood to be part of a person's overall identity, consisting of the memories, feelings, beliefs and meanings associated with their physical surroundings.<sup>44</sup> This is a context of study in environmental psychology, I was drawn to as I personally became aware of, my own changing relation to places of my upbringing. This, I recognise now that I live in the UK, having an impact on the perception of my childhood, my family of origin, and how I relate to my own. The moment of the realization of this was a quite distressing experience, at Isola d'Elba, Tuscany, in 2016, where I had been holidaying since I was a young girl. I woke up in the middle of the night short of breath, sweating. I got out of the very warm bedroom to get water from the kitchen, and drink, freshen up my forehead, and wrists, and neck. Once in the living room, I sat on the couch. Then I stood up again, walked up and down the room. Memories from my early childhood at the beach started surfacing. I needed to get out of the house. I opened the doors overlooking the garden facing the sea. The strong smell of Mediterranean pine trees and iodine was intense in the humidity filled scirocco air. I started to make sense of where I was, again.

When this happened – soon after the British voted to leave the EU – I started consolidating my ongoing investigation into how one relates to places, by addressing attachment to (and separation from) them and people. This includes feeling a great sense of responsibility while considering a continuous shifting process of rooting (attachment), and uprooting (separation), also through my children's eyes: their own experiences and choices, as inseparable from mine.

Together with my personal interest in the topic of this research, the subjective input from the collaborators and participants in the project is also paramount for an understanding of how one relates to place and others as situated knowledge.

Architecture Psychologist David Seamon, describes place as being not only the "physical environment separate from people associated with it, but rather the indivisible,

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41. According to Casey a relationship self-place should not only have reciprocal influence (as any ecologically sensitive account would entail) but to constitute co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other. Edward Casey states the important of the relation of philosophy with geography and suggests Yi-Fu Tuan's work of some twenty years ago as being 'epoch-making' (p. 403) as it stresses the experiential features of place its 'subjective' or 'lived' aspects.

42. Cresswell (2009, p. 174).

43. Massey (1993).

44. Proshansky *et al.* (1983); Jack (2010).

normally unnoticed phenomenon of person-or-people-experiencing-place.”<sup>45</sup> Seamon also attributes to Merlau-Ponty a great contribution to understanding lived synergism of place, through referring to his concept of *body-subject* (1962). This is the precognitive facility of the lived body to integrate its actions with the world at hand. Seamon states that *place attachment*<sup>46</sup> is one’s emotional or affective ties to a place, and is thought to be the result of a long-term connection with it, and, he believes, develops through a routine, process he defined *place ballet* (1979).

My understanding of it was embedded in an investigation into the body routines as contributing to how an attachment was developed and grounded in habitual regularity, during a short stay in Vienna for an art residency with my son. I thus recorded with a series of short films and drawn dotted patterns our steps of the daily journeys to the beach on the river, our local grocery, and café, in relation to others’ (Fig. 3).

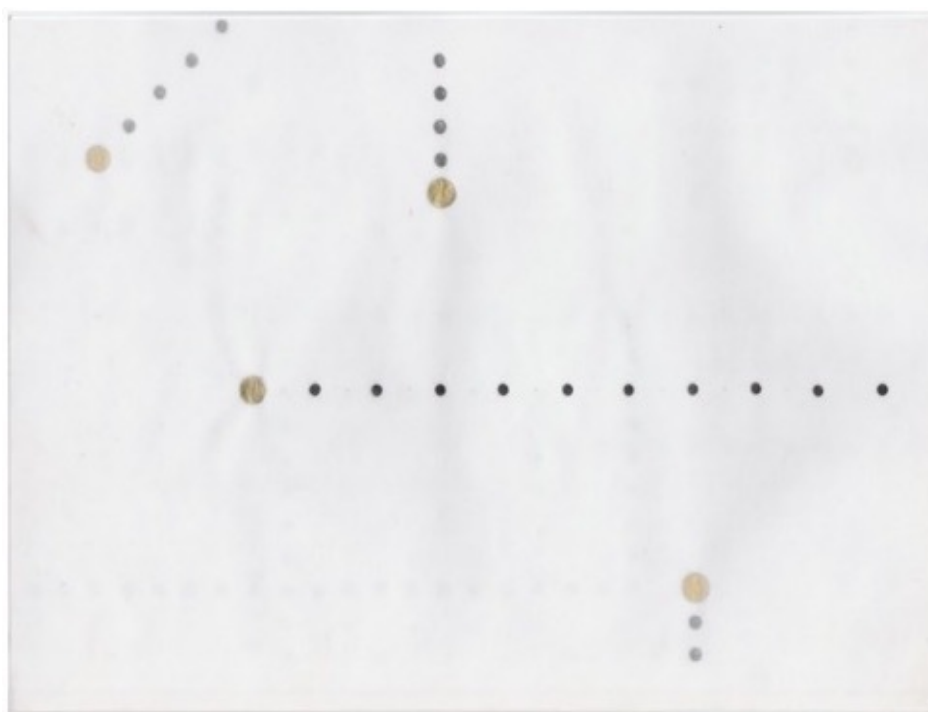


Fig. 3 – Elena Cologni, *Untitled (routines)* superimposition of 2, from series of 6, 2016, graphite, Indian ink and gold on lucido paper, Private Collection.

This included documenting the simple act of walking with its movement and rest, which informed the creative engagement with a pattern found on the tarmac of a courtyard in the MuseumsQuartier where we stayed, for the experiential piece called *Lived Dialectics: Movement and Rest* (1 & 2) (Fig. 4), facilitated by two persons, presented there (2016). The title refers directly to Seamon’s seminal book *A Geography of the Lifeworld: Movement, Rest, and Encounter* (1979) in which he discusses the ‘triad of abituality,’ and he

45. Seamon (2013).

46. Seamon (2013); Jack (2010).

specifies that “people encounter the world as they move and rest, dwell and journey,”<sup>47</sup> experience which Seamon believes to be at the heart of place attachment.



Fig. 4 – (a) Elena Cogni, *eidotipo a*, study for performance score, 2016, graphite, Indian ink and gold on lucido paper; (b) Elena Cogni, *Lived Dialectics: Movement and Rest #1*, site specific, facilitators + elastic string, Q21, MuseumsQuartier, Vienna, Austria, curators Gulsen Bal and Walter Siedl.

This final piece thus was informed by the exploration of the connection between a shared experience of this new place, and developing attachment to it. The emphasis of the social aspect of place attachment led to develop SoA, where the investigation would be set in the place where both I and the participants live, and routines refer to a longer span of time, and memories. Drawing on research from fields such as psychology, human geography and environmental psychology I wanted to progress from this previous work: how might one inscribe a new experience in the place of a daily routine through art? How might one become aware of one’s own attachment to a place through the attachment to one’s own family, one might call home? Crucially, the sense of belonging to a particular place is a fundamental component of the way that most people understand who they are, their identity, underpins their feelings of security and belonging,<sup>48</sup> and can be ‘strong, weak, positive or negative, narrow, wide or diffuse.’<sup>49</sup>

The importance of the social aspect in the process of developing place attachment is indicated by Seamon with the term ‘encounter,’ the third in his theory. This aspect however becomes central in Catherine Degen’s, as she suggests that place attachment is not only individual and that can “be fruitfully understood as situated within the concatenation – the series of interconnected things – of place, belonging, social memory, embodied subjectivity and everyday experiences.”<sup>50</sup> Degen’s investigation is underpinned by anthropological and sociological studies where, relations to and through place also refer to ‘belonging.’<sup>51</sup> If generally the emphasis of studies on place attachment is on an

47. Seamon (1979, p. 139).

48. Jack (2010), examines specifically the significance of children’s place attachments.

49. Rubinstein, Parmelee (1992).

50. Degen (2015, p. 1646).

51. Benson, Jackson (2013).



individual bond with place, Degnen states that relations with and through place are not only personal, emphasizing how place attachment is bound up in social memory, embodied knowledge and the significance of the passage of time.

Among the everyday experiences of place routines through which place attachment is built, SoA considers the school run, and refers to the attachment of carers and school-aged children as an important link in this process.

I here specifically refer to attachment theories since early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including those by John Bowlby,<sup>52</sup> which relate to those by psychoanalysts, such as Klein (1952), Winnicott (1953), Erikson (1950) and Bion (1962), and form the context for Margaret Lowenfeld's research. These suggested that a well-integrated child is one for whom the attachment between the infant and a parenting figure is engendered within a holding or containing environment, which allows the infant time to establish a sense of being an individual who is separate from the primary caring figure.<sup>53</sup>

Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space,<sup>54</sup> and does not have to be reciprocal, or one person may have an attachment to an individual, which is not shared. In children, attachment is characterized by specific behaviors, such as seeking proximity with the attachment figure when upset or threatened,<sup>55</sup> and more parents accept the child on the child's terms, the more securely attached the child is.<sup>56</sup> Bowlby suggested that unless firm attachment was formed between the child and his mother within the first five years of life, the child would develop an affectionless psychopathy,<sup>57</sup> and called "maternal deprivation."

Bowlby's position called monotropy theory, is contrasted by Michael Rutter (1981) who found that when problematic children returned to a stable environment, they would settle down and become less inclined to anti-social behaviour, thus distancing the attachment figure to that of solely the mother. Similarly, Anna Freud,<sup>58</sup> indicated alter-

52. Bowlby (1944, 1988); Holmes (2001); Ainsworth (1979); Freud A., Burlingham (1944).

53. Klein (1952) emphasised the important role the parenting figure has in holding the infant's primitive fears and anxieties. Winnicott and Bion with their respective notions of "the facilitating environment" (Winnicott, 1953) and "maternal Reverie" (Bion, 1962) place a great deal of emphasis on the significance of mutuality in the primary attachment relationship. For them this relationship has a different but equally as intense significance for the maternal figure as it does for the infant. Erikson (1950) believed a healthy consistent attachment relationship lead to the child being able to develop trusting relationships.

54. Ainsworth (1979); Bowlby (1969).

55. Bowlby (1969).

56. Ainsworth, Bowlby (1965).

57. Bowlby (1988).

58. I gave a talk at the Freud Museum in London, part of the program of the exhibition "So this is the Strong Sex Early Women Psychoanalysts" (29 November 2017 - 4 February 2018), on the major influence Marie Bonaparte, Helene Deutsch, Emma Eckstein, Anna Freud, Lou Andreas-Salomé and Sabina Spielrein had on the work of Sigmund Freud and the development of psychoanalysis. The original exhibition conceived by Monika Pessler, Daniela Finzi and Johanna Frei, Sigmund Freud Museum Vienna.

native attachment figures, through research conducted with a group of six children from a war time concentration camp, who had been orphaned and were firmly committed to each other. They regarded their peers as the central figures of attachment, rather than their parents. This work, like Rutter's suggests, shows that bonding with the mother is not always necessary for successful attachment and socialization.<sup>59</sup> I find this to be very forward looking, possibly anticipating ideas of new forms of families, where motherhood is intended in a wider and not only a biological sense,<sup>60</sup> thus pointing to the caring role of *mothering* instead. Care ethicists have addressed a concept of mothering in society among other practices of care, to include, caring for the ill, teaching children, cultivating social relations. These Virginia Held defines as *caring relations*,<sup>61</sup> as discussed below. Moreover, care ethicist and psychologist Carol Gilligan states that: "All relationships, public and private can be characterized in terms both of equality and in terms of attachment. And that both inequality and detachment constitute grounds for moral concern."<sup>62</sup>

Margareth Lowenfeld contributed greatly to the study of children psychology.<sup>63</sup> Her theories and methods were developed within a context when psychoanalysis was very prominent, however, Lowenfeld presented her work as distinguished from it, mainly through the adoption of a non-verbal approach.<sup>64</sup> For example in the paper *Direct Projective Therapy* (1944) included in a collection edited by Urwin and Hood-Williams (1998),<sup>65</sup> Lowenfeld acknowledges the studies done in child psychology and psychotherapy by Freud, Jung and Adler "concerning the development of the instinctive influence upon a child's life of his own self-valuation," and directs her attention towards "a sphere which is outside all of these" and which "lies below and around them: this is the sphere of the child's non-verbal thoughts about his own intimate experience and effect they have upon his later development."<sup>66</sup>

Urwin and Hood-Williams (1998) also explain how her paper *The Nature of the Primary System* (1948), is the fullest account on her *protosystem*, concerned with the nature of "pre-rational thought," and "in what ways the young child links experiences and perceptions to provide cognitive but not conscious mental structures which peg the workings

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59. Freud A., Burlingham (1942, 1944).

60. Golombok (2015).

61. Held (2006).

62. Gilligan (1994, p. 262).

63. Mead (1979). Margaret Mead was a close collaborator who states that Lowenfeld belonged "to the pantheon of those who have enlarged our understanding of children – Erik Erikson, Anna Freud, Arnold Gesell, Melanie Klein and Jean Piaget – and those who have been providing the links between our understanding of the arts, of history and of the experiences of early childhood – Gregory Bateson, Edith Cobb, Geoffrey Gorer, Susan Isaacs, Ella Sharpe, David Winnicott and Martha Wolfenstein."

64. Urwin, Hood-Williams (1988).

65. *Ibidem*.

66. Ivi, p. 315.



of infantile phantasy."<sup>67</sup>

In this paper Lowenfeld states that the method she adopted was aimed at enabling children to talk "without the use of language," this has "brought to light an aspect of the human psyche" which she suggested at that point had not been described, and which she called 'primary system.' This is a "systematized region in the psyche" which "appears first, and remains for life at the core of the psyche."<sup>68</sup> She says that "Piaget's 'syncretism'<sup>69</sup> and Sigmund Freud's conception of 'condensation and displacement' in dreams,<sup>70</sup> passages in Ruth Griffiths' and Michael Fordham's *Child Life*, and Herbert Read's *Education Through Art* (1943) touch upon the same region."<sup>71</sup> The non-verbal approach in her work is central to the development of my artistic strategy and is further discussed below.

#### 1.4. The Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test*

My artistic investigation was carried out through an initial non-verbal approach: by activating a nomadic and dialogic sculpture in the city, as illustrated in more details below. This engagement strategy, including the prop, was based on the haptic qualities and interactive principles of the Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* (1938, 1954), I was able to study through a residency at The Margaret Lowenfeld Library, Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge (2016).

The Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* since being introduced in the 1940s, besides its continued use at Dr. Lowenfeld's Institute of Child Psychology before its closure, its being widely implied in different contexts by, including: "anthropologists in cultural and cross-cultural studies; psychologists in the study of normal children and adults as well as mental defect; psychiatrists for differential diagnosis and the study of mental disorder."<sup>72</sup> However, it was primarily used as a "communication tool in the diagnosis and psychotherapeutic treatment of children" as Thérèse Woodcock<sup>73</sup> states, and describes as follows.

Administrative Procedure. The mosaic pieces are laid out ready for use in a box, grouped by shape and displaying all the colours in each shape. There are five shapes, all bearing a mathematical relation to each other. The basic shape is a square from which the isosceles, equilateral and scalene triangles are derived: the sides of the diamond are the same length as the

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67. Ivi, p. 317.

68. Ivi, p. 325.

69. Piaget (1929).

70. Freud S. (1900).

71. Ivi, p. 315.

72. Woodcock (1984). The paper was given at the 1983 Autumn Conference of The British Society for Projective Psychology and Personality Study, London.

73. *Ibidem*.

square (30 mm). Each shape is available in red, blue, yellow, black, green and white and arranged in the box in this order.

Woodcock writes that this box is presented to the child alongside a tray (filled with plain white paper) and the variety of pieces available and then asked to “do something with these pieces, using as few or as many as you choose, on this tray. You can make anything you like.”

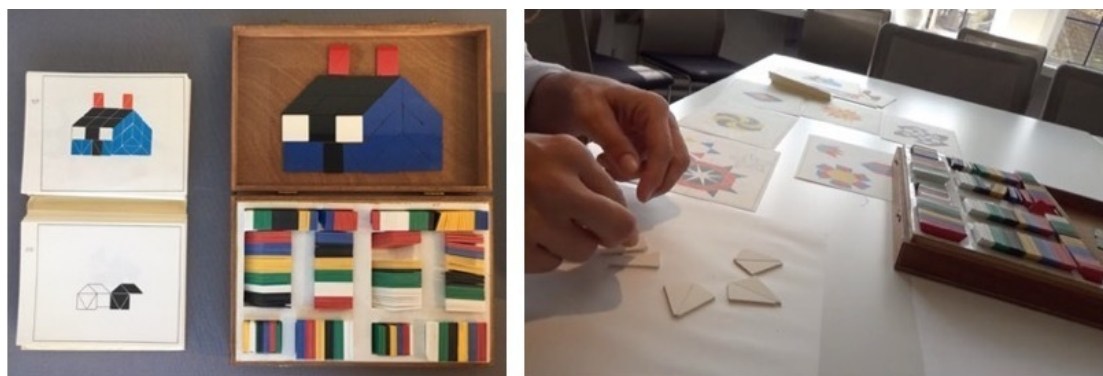


Fig. 5 – (a) Margaret Lowenfeld's Mosaic Box (a house seen in perspective, table 2) part of the Lowenfeld archive. Courtesy of the Centre for Family for Family Research, Cambridge University; (b) Elena Cologni during the residency at the Lowenfeld Library.

Woodcock then states that, when the child has finished, she usually discusses with them what they have made. She says that “care has to be taken not to allow one's own preconceptions to be reflected in the questions.” Woodcock discusses the non-verbal communication by stating that “the Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* [...] is firstly a tool to enable the child (or adult for that matter) to explore and express non-verbalizable ideas, using the pieces as a personal vocabulary [...] its value lies not in a score but in the INDIVIDUALITY of the response,” one which is going to give insight into the child's view and approach to the world.

In another paper by Woodcock, held in the Lowenfeld Archive, *The Lowenfeld Mosaic Test in the study of cultural differences* (1986), she discusses the importance of such non-verbal approach in the context of more recently increasingly relevant intercultural dialogue dynamics.<sup>74</sup> This reading of the test confirmed my initial idea that it was very current and relevant from social, political and cultural perspectives, and particularly relevant to my interests<sup>75</sup> and the new direction undertaken in this project.

This intercultural aspect is also at the very core of the genesis of the test. Lowenfeld who, after the First World War, lived in Geneva writes that she was taken by the diversity in costume, dance and song to be found in Europe's individual communities throughout.<sup>76</sup> She states how the patterns on those costumes define communities of

74. Woodcock (1986); Woodcock (2006).

75. Cologni (2016).

76. Lowenfeld (1954, p. 31).

specific villages, and wanted to investigate them further to search for a relationship between people and their communal expressions. Lowenfeld observed that the embroidery of south-eastern European in particular was characterized by geometric shapes. She thus started to experiment with wooden reproduction of those shapes,<sup>77</sup> before defining what is now known as “The Mosaic Test Box.”

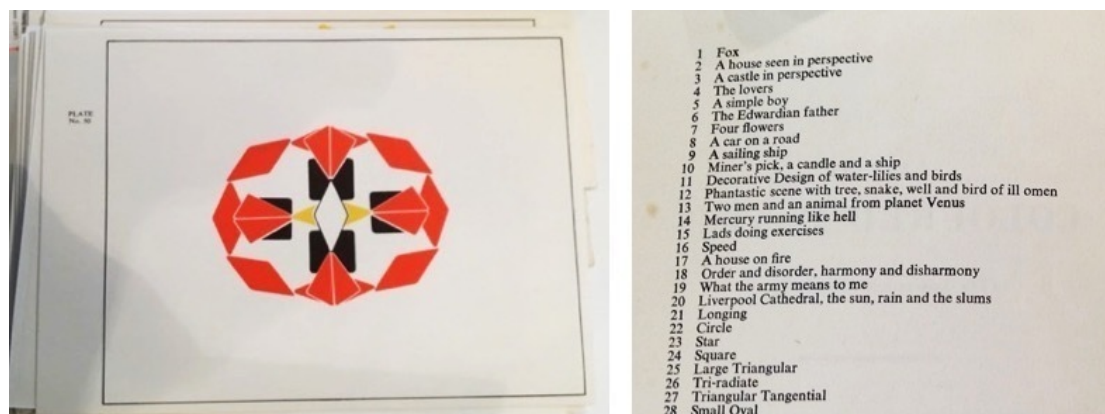


Fig. 6 – (a) The Margaret Lowenfeld's Mosaic Test, 80 tables, this is n. 50 and is titled *Superimposed*; (b) a detail from the list of table accompanying the series. Courtesy of the Centre for Family for Family Research, Cambridge University.

A series of tables are included in the book from 1954. They documented the results of the Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* performed in the 1950's (Fig. 6 a and b). These are accompanied by titles which were given by the person offering the test in conversation with the child or adult taking it, as Woodcock explains, and are organized in response to very specific categories.

According to anthropologist Margaret Mead (1979) who was a Lowenfeld's close collaborator,

her preoccupation “with the insufficiency of words to express those aspects of childhood,” at the core of her research have become important anthropological research tools.<sup>78</sup> However, the finished product (mosaic) alone, was only half of the story. The rest was the participation of the therapist or tester in the process of making a mosaic design.<sup>79</sup> This relational aspect in the test is also discussed in the *Ecology of Imagination in Childhood* by Edith Cobb (1959), specifically referring to the relationship therapist-patient therein. In this context interestingly ecology is referred by Cobb to as “the study

77. Ivi, p. 32.

78. The kaleidoblocs and poleidoblocs are now widely used in introducing children to mathematics and logic.

79. Apparently due to the peculiar nature of this, it took almost twenty years of active experimentation with methods of recording the process and finished product, to devise a method, as Margaret Mead explains in Lowenfeld M. (1979). *The World Technique*. London: George Allen and Unwin.

of mutual relations, the give-and-take between organisms and their complete and total environment.”<sup>80</sup>

## 2. Towards Defining an Artistic Non-Verbal Dialogic Method

The participatory approach I set to define included a dialogic sculpture inspired by the non-verbal principle in the Lowenfeld test as described above, while contributing to the artistic context of dialogic art in relation to place. Moreover, below is a discussion of the consistent effort to visualize and materialize the spatial aspect in the non-verbal dynamic in the context of my previous research, my current ongoing practice is built on.

In the discussed SoA project the process of this spatiality of dialogue manifest in the newly created ‘safe place’ the sculptural prop defines. This is here articulated in reference of the concept of ‘insideness’ in place attachment, and defined as ‘intraplace.’

### 2.1. Visualising Dialogue

My current artistic dialogic practice stems from a consistent interest in audience and spectator’s relation, including in: the process of fruition;<sup>81</sup> interchange in liveness;<sup>82</sup> the process of memorization in video live events,<sup>83</sup> and one-to-one installations.<sup>84</sup>

These were addressed through dialogic strategies, more recently underpinned by psychology and pedagogy, including Danilo Dolci’s *Reciprocal Maieutics*.<sup>85</sup> This is relevant to discuss here, as it contextualises the spatial dimension in dialogue, central issue in SoA, as it implies a relational approach also at the core of care ethics, as discussed later.

Dolci believed “that no real change can abstract from the involvement and the direct participation of the people concerned,”<sup>86</sup> and was necessary in order to create a more open and responsible civil society. His reciprocal maieutics method comes from Socrates’ maieutic (introduced by him in Plato’s *Theaetetus*) in which he compares the philosopher to a “midwife of knowledge” that helps the student bring his knowledge to light, using the dialogue as a dialectical tool.<sup>87</sup> Adopting Dolci’s reciprocity though implies not only posing a question, but allowing oneself to be changed by others’

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80. Cobb (1959, p. 539).

81. Cologni (2004).

82. Cologni (2006).

83. Cologni (2009).

84. In the video live installation *Re-Moved* at the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow (Glasgow International Biannual 2008), the verbal dialogue was based on the time delay in live feed referred to Thomas Suddenford test on undersanding of selfawareness in children. The exchange was at the core of the meaning making strategy in the work, an example of co-production.

85. Dolci (1973); Cologni (2016).

86. Kjell (1973).

87. Reale (1987).

input as well. I became interested in the spatial aspect – distance – in dialogue, I visualised through a series of 40 wooden sculptures for hands *Lo Scarto*.<sup>88</sup> This space and distance between people, which appears to be empty, also implies the possibility that one can overcome that distance in the exchange, and become empowered in the process. I experimented with this through a series of public workshops, drawings and the sculptures for hands, by considering the space between people as residues, left overs, as well as embedding the potential for communication. For example, the small sculptures resulting from drawings outlining the spaces between two hands, would be used to connect with others, as in the action that I defined of ‘pollination,’ where participants were invited to use such sculptures to invite other people into the tacit conversation. This action had quite an effect on the local community, as I was told highlighted, while challenging at the same time, the presence of social barriers among youngsters.



Fig. 7 – Elena Cologni, *Lo Scarto*, 2015, Sicily: (a) workshop (b) performed drawing, (c) sculptures for hands and documented ‘pollination moment.’

The project evolved into *Lo Scarto (Touch)*,<sup>89</sup> which aimed at capturing the very moment in which the dialogue takes place in the present. In it, participants connect in pairs through a geometric shape of soft clay. This eventually becomes distorted in the process of manipulation, while defining the space between them into unique objects. Such a so-

88. Cologni (2016).

89. A similar approach was tested through the dialogic action *Lo Scarto (Touch)*, 2015, at Impington Village College, in the exhibition “A Modernity which Forgets; #TransActing: A Market of Values” organised by Critical Practice, Chelsea College of Art UAL, London; a version with 5 people was presented at BIBAC Conference University of Cambridge with Paul Connerton.



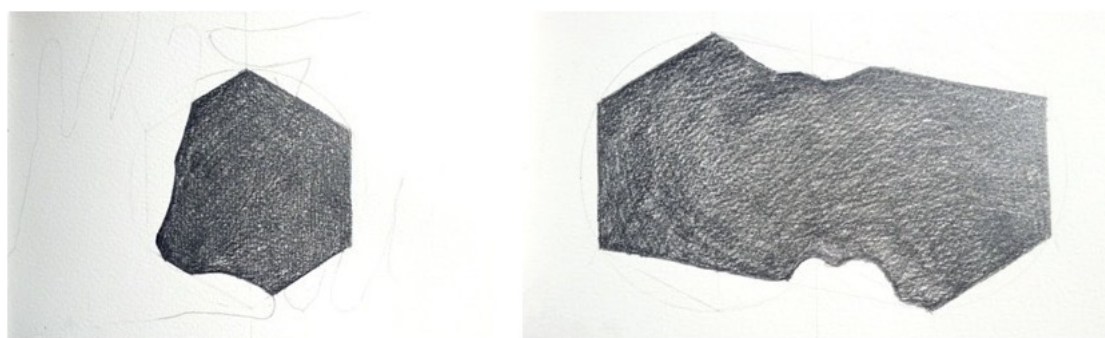


Fig. 8 – Elena Cologni, *Lo Scarto* (*Touch: squeezing*), 2015, graphite on paper.

cially negotiated practice allows embodied memories,<sup>90</sup> carried in gestures and habits, to be exchanged as a form of knowledge of one another conveyed through touch.

This form of engagement, of non-verbal dialogue, is a reciprocal dynamic of question and response. A 'question' already implies an openness towards the other's background and differences. In particular, in the encounter the question informs the blank space between hands, which has been inhabited. The distance between two people, a materialized topography, at the time I referred to as 'place memory,'<sup>91</sup> acts as point of contact, exchange and separation.

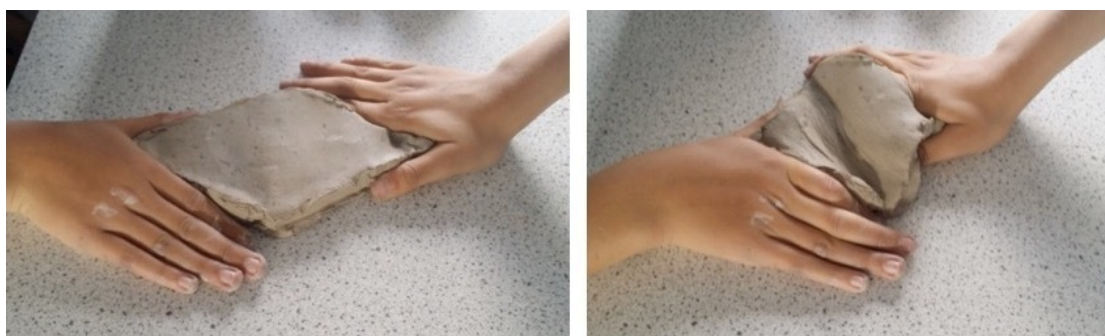


Fig. 9 – Elena Cologni, *Lo Scarto* (*Touch*), 2015, participants' response, clay, circa 6 x 12 cms.

Participants feel and listen in order to respond, a necessary condition for the Reciprocal Maieutics Approach as a way of sharing one's own experience to inform the other's. This is also how "communicative memory works, through the integration of different traditions, an aspect of which will be lost or discarded along the way... *lo scarto*, off-cut, scrap, residue of culture...."<sup>92</sup> The exchange, happens in the present of the encounter, when embodied memories surface through pulling, pushing, pressing, joining, connecting, adjoining, abutting, tapping, patting, nudging, prodding, poking, feeling, stroking, rubbing, brushing, grazing, fondling, caressing, petting, tickling, fiddling

90. Connerton (1989).

91. Connerton (2009).

92. Cologni (2016).

with, fingering, thumbing, handling, affecting, concerning, involving, moving, stirring, arousing, making/leaving an impression on... Thus the residual space between hands is shaped, through touch, embedding who we are in response to each other.

## 2.2. A Sculptural Prop to Define *Intraplaces*

The above gives a sense of how I adopt a creative process to access other contexts of knowledge, which in turn underpin my newly found strategies. In the examples of my previous projects above, the relational approach refers to both place, and others. These two strands of investigation are here brought together to coincide, by considering the very spatial element in dialogic dynamics, to become a safe place. This process I describe below.

During a period of research as artist in residence at the Lowenfeld Library I accessed the only existing original Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test* (MLMT) Box (1938), securely kept at the Centre for Family Research in Cambridge. Before reading the relevant literature, I started re-making the shapes I had selected from the beautifully typograph printed tables. It felt as though I was getting into someone else's mind, a sort of reenactment of the relational process therapist-patient. While borrowing the latter's thinking and feeling process, I was arranging the pieces according to that image. At times, I would draw the outline of the composition on the paper underneath, by way of recording the process, as it was done by the therapist giving the test. While this was a way to respond to it, it also allowed me to focus on the geometry behind those very arrangements through drawing. This soon took me to explore a series of 3D card made variations based on the same drawings.

These were conceived to be played with by the participants, whose interaction would include folding and unfolding a sectioned geometric image to create a number of possible compositions, and they did during an open studio event at the Centre. These small handheld constructions though were thought to be then reproduced in a bigger size for a sculptural prop to relate to the whole body, and to be activated accordingly.

The series of drawings for the final prop included variations on a composition of a set number of shapes, just like the MLMT. These were inscribed into a closed shape divided into six portions including triangles and squares, but also sections of circles, not present in the named test. The addition of this curved element, was further emphasised by the use of stretchy fabric covering the foldable sculpture, which creates arches as the folding, and structuring of the shapes takes place in the interaction. It softens the angles the bare plywood would create otherwise, suggesting a different approach to geometry and how this is understood and implied in our everyday, and in relation to place. This might include how we fold dry laundry, organise the furniture in our living room, or map our walks. All seems to refer back to a Cartesian system, but a more complex and multidimensional one also includes other parameters. Doreen Massey calls *power-geometry*<sup>93</sup> and points to the ways in which spatiality and mobility are both

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93. Massey (1993).



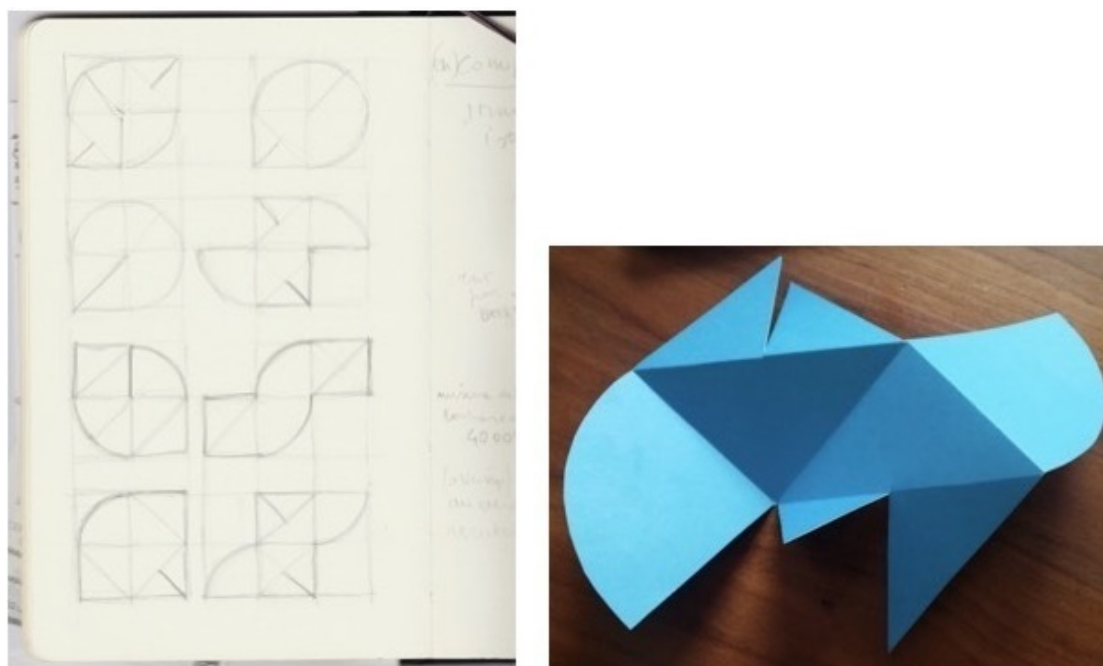


Fig. 10 – (a) Elena Cologni, sketchbook with designs studies, 2016, graphite on paper; (b) Elena Cologni, example of 3D shape experimentation.

shaped by, and reproduce power differentials in society. One has to think at a gendered kind of geometry,<sup>94</sup> a *geometry of difference*,<sup>95</sup> as conventional mapping practices might compress those differentials. McDowell, building on Doreen Massey, but also referring to Foucault and Jameson, attempted to ‘spatialize’ feminist theory by referring to ‘space’ as relational, and where spatial patterns are outcome of social processes.

In SoA the strategy adopted seeks to embed social dynamics, and memory in the understanding of how one might inscribe a shared spatial experience, and is seen as contributing to tracing a geography of difference.

Participants responded to an open call, to take part in the project,<sup>96</sup> knowing that this would feed into its development. On the webpage it read:

Are you a parent? Are you willing to meet me on your school run route?  
Your input will contribute to the creative investigation into identity forma-

94. Harigary (1988), discussed in the conference presentations: *On Care, and Finding the Cur(v)e. A Geometry of Difference Through Caring*, performance in Ecologies of Care: Feminist Activism, curator Basia Sliwinska, 108th CAA Annual Conference, Chicago 2020; *On Care, and Finding the Cur(v)e. A Geometry of Difference Through Caring*, workshop in Paradox Fine Art European Forum Art Future / Future Signs 2019 in Riga, Latvia: [program]; “Intraplaces Ecofeminism Care and Spatialized Art” in Spatial Dialogues, 107th CAA Annual Conference, New York 2019.

95. McDowell (1996, p. 38).

96. During “Art Language Location”, Contemporary and Performance Art Festival in Cambridge, between the 13th and the 29rd of October 2016.



Fig. 11 – (a, b, c) Elena Cogni, *Prop*, 2016-18, maquette variations series, plywood, fabric variable dimensions.

tion in relation to place attachment. Get in touch, and indicate where you could meet me in the city, do enter your details or send an email.

The school run is an important part in children's life in relation to their cares, and a particularly significant one in the social dynamics in any city or village in the UK. Generally, by considering how place attachment is developed through the routine of relating to a place<sup>97</sup> in the project the school run is seen as an example of daily activity contributing to this process, which will lead to a healthy independence, later in childhood.

Environmentalist Jenny Bavidge discusses<sup>98</sup> Doreen Massey's work on space, place and gender,<sup>99</sup> by stating that she "saw spatial divisions as expressive of economic divisions and inequalities in the division of labour 'articulated' in spatial form."<sup>100</sup> Bavidge refers to Massey's notion of 'place' and our experience of it as not static, but as an expression of social relations 'stretched over space.'<sup>101</sup> She states that 'places have multiple identities (may be perceived differently by different users) and they don't have fixed borders, with a clear in and out which we move through like turnstiles at a fair. An everyday event like the school run has its own rhythms and its own rituals which are repeatedly re-enacted in the shared space of the street and the school gate, both public and

97. Seamon (2013).

98. The implications of our daily relationship with place, as in SoA, was discussed in the the roundtable "Nomadic and Dialogic: Art and Ecofeminism," at New Hall Art Collection, Cambridge 2017, chaired by Curator Eliza Gluckman, artist myself, Professor Susan Buckingham and Dr Jenny Bavidge discuss motherhood, place, dialogic art and ecofeminism. This will address the 'caring' role devalued in neo-liberal societies, and the spatial dimension of dialogue as inter-corporeal space of micropolitics. The event is part of the Cambridge Festival of Ideas 2017, video extract available: [<https://vimeo.com/245027829>].

99. Massey (1993, pp. 59-69).

100. Extract from the same roundtable "Nomadic and Dialogic: Art and Ecofeminism" above: [<https://vimeo.com/245027829>].

101. Massey sees places and space as dynamic and living and her goal is to bring space alive, to dynamize it and to make it relevant. Places are both local and specific, but also fluid and porous; as Massey argues that they are always 'in process.'

private.’<sup>102</sup>

Following the open call, the sculptural prop was used in a series of encounters with 10 participants/carers, who are here referred to as ‘mothers’ over the period of a year. The participants indicated a place on their school run route in the city, where we met. I brought the prop folded up into a purple squared parcel, fixed to a trolley with elastic strap cords. This was opened up, and transformed into a variety of shapes and constructions, distorted by the stretchy fabric. The dimension was such that the whole of our bodies was involved in the physical and silent dialogue. We then sat on the construction we had created, resulting from a non-verbal conversation.



Fig. 12 – (a, b) Elena Cologni, *Untitled (Prop)*, dialogic and nomadic sculpture being activated, 2016-2018, plywood and fabric, 100 x 100 x 2 cm closed / variable up to 250 x 200 cm when open.

The activation of the sculpture resulted in a newly created quasi-geometric softened shape. This process results in what I called *Intraplace*,<sup>103</sup> including the manifestation of the process of interchange, through which a location was redefined, now connoted with this intersubjective, inter-corporeal and shared experience. This highlighted the interrelations between objects occurring ‘in space and time,’ relationships which themselves ‘create/define space and time.’<sup>104</sup> This is the context within which the process of creating *intraplaces* emerges, and defines a gendered experience of space, including a feminist reading of spatialization, a regime of ‘spacings’ and ‘placings’ of people and activities, and characterised by connectiveness.<sup>105</sup> *Intraplaces* embeds Haraway’s notion of *geometry of difference*,<sup>106</sup> also defined by Massey as *power-geometry*,<sup>107</sup> which points to the

102. *Ibidem*.

103. As discussed at Freud Museum in the talk “Attachment & Intraplaces: Discussing a Nomadic and Dialogic Approach in Spatialized Art Practice”, January 2018, where the series of collages with the same title was also shown.

104. Massey (1996, p. 263).

105. McDowell (1996, pp. 28-44).

106. Ivi, p. 38.

107. Massey (1993, pp. 59-69).

ways in which spatiality and mobility are both shaped by and reproduce power differentials in society. Geographer McDowell suggests that if we move towards a definition of identity and place as a 'network of relations, unbound and unstable, rather than fixed, we are able to challenge essentialist notions of place and being.'<sup>108</sup>

The dialogic process resulting in the intraplace, is considered as tool for 'measuring' and enhancing an awareness on one's own attachment to place. The measure used here though, is a non-cartesian one, is not metric, numeric or quantitative, and as such it does not define and draw space spatially, but experientially. It functions in the duration of the presentness of the dialogue and in relation to embodied memory. The adoption of such process can be said to be an attempt of *un-spatialising* space, resulting from a relational approach, a non-verbal dialogue, that embeds the subjective experience therein.

*Intraplaces* is also the title for the series of collages which serve as a documentation for the encounters. These were produced from printed stills selected from a video recording of the interaction. The shapes formed by the 'foldings' of the sculpture through the interaction, were cut out and arranged in a grid as a record of the non-verbal dialogues to form two collages *Intraplaces (Record Forms)*. These were later developed in a series of single shape plates.



Fig. 13 – (a) Elena Cogni, image cut out of the film still to be used in collages; (b) Elena Cogni, *Intraplaces (Record Forms)*, 2017, collage and ink on paper), awaiting to be hung in the exhibition " ...And Encounter," New Hall Art Collection, University of Cambridge.

The intraplaces embed the exchange that happened in those physical locations where participants chose to meet on the school run, which Environmental psychologist Graham Rowles<sup>109</sup> calls 'incident places.' These narrate people's connection between people and place and build a sense of identity through a process Rowles calls 'autobio-

108. Ivi, p. 3.

109. Rowles (1983, pp. 299-313).





Fig. 14 – Elena Cologni, *Plate*, n. 11, 2017, from the series *Intraplaces*, collage on paper and graphite.

graphical insideness,<sup>110</sup> also pertinent to the way in which the participants perceive place not just as it is in the present, but also as it is remembered. It links place, identity and memory.

In the intraplace, the space between the bodies the sculpture inhabits resulting from the non-verbal dialogic approach adopted, is also a form of omission of spoken text, silence as absence, which constitute tacit, situated<sup>111</sup> and embodied knowledge produced during the exchange, and informed by embodied memory. This process also contributes to social memory, which is not only cognitive but is also often embodied with bodily practices<sup>112</sup> able to 'sediment' meaning and memory in bodies<sup>113</sup> and to underpin the deeply embodied, relational and sensuous elements of place attachment.

Moreover, the term intraplace refers to a context where place and time are determined by the one-to-one dialogic strategy adopted, which implies an exchange of embodied memory and is unique to the individuals involved in this micro-social context.<sup>114</sup> It indicates the formation of an enclosed physical space, and as conceptual container for

110. Ivi, p. 303. Rowles' concept of "insideness" includes three elements: physical insideness, social insideness and autobiographical insideness, working together to constitute place attachment.

111. Haraway (1991, p. 183).

112. Degnen (2015).

113. Connerton (1989, pp. 72-3).

114. This is to be distinguished by the term *interplace*, which in environmental psychology points at the set of relations one or more individuals have to place, in Bechtel, Churchman (2002, pp 31-38).

intimate exchanges, never disclosed, but only safely shared to unlock new potentialities. Thus, the resulting collage is a visualisation, and materialization, of such spatial dialogic dynamics, which also recalls the gestural, and mostly silent, communication in the feminist art tradition, including for example in the work of Ketty La Rocca.<sup>115</sup>

### 2.3. Listening – The Untold

One of the central issues in the strategy adopted in the project, is the importance of the ‘untold,’<sup>116</sup> which the intraplaces imply. These are the very shapes the sculptural prop is turned into, the actual materialisation of the dialogue. One which similarly includes question and answer: the action of unfolding one part of the sculpture, to which corresponds the reaction of moving another part. A reciprocal dialogue takes place which implies ‘attentiveness, responsibility, responsiveness and the commitment to see issues from differing perspectives.’ These are, according to Selma Sevenhuijsen, at the core of ethics of care. The dialogic approach provides for a metaphor for practices of care, including mothering, these practices Sevenhuijsen states imply ‘an ability and a willingness to “see” and to “hear” needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met.’ Listening is at the basis of these from the part of the receivers and the providers of actual care.

The physical dialogue also include a negotiation of the sculpture’s weight, balance and aesthetics, to avoid from it being arranged precariously, and provide an inhabitable space instead. This kind of experiential non-verbal dialogue results in, to use one of the participant’s words, a ‘safe place’ (Fig. 12). The shapes are the responses sought as part of the research process, and they feed back into the project. The diptic of collages *Intraplaces (Record Forms)*, is the first attempt to document the process in an organised manner, visually referring to Lowenfeld tables accompanying list of numbered titles for the tests.

The initial dialogic physical exchange happening through the sculpture/prop would make us relate to one another on a physical experiential level, and to a particular place, which thus got reactivated. In doing this we created a new memory in relation to it, and inscribed it into a new experience for the adult, separate from that in their daily routine with the child. One of the participants, Sharon, stated that the sculpture would fill these not connotated spaces in the city, she defined as ‘corridors’ and ‘walk-through’ spaces, with meaning, and turn them into safe places.

This context was now where a verbal conversation could take place, as it was likely going to be driven by our first exchange, and I would ask: “where is home?.” The conversation was not later disclosed, but embedded in a further step in my creative

115. Iaquina (2018).

116. The non-verbal dialogic artistic approach adopted here, evolved from the experience first-hand of being entrusted by participants with emotional personal details and stories (eg. *Re-Moved* 2008 Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow, Glasgow International Biennial); *U Verruzze (Balancing)* 2013/14, curators Vessel, exhibitions at Doppelgaenger Gallery, Bari Italy, and Athens Biennial, Greece), I did not feel I could share.



Fig. 15 – (a) Elena Cogni, interaction with a participant; (b) sitting on the resulting safe place.

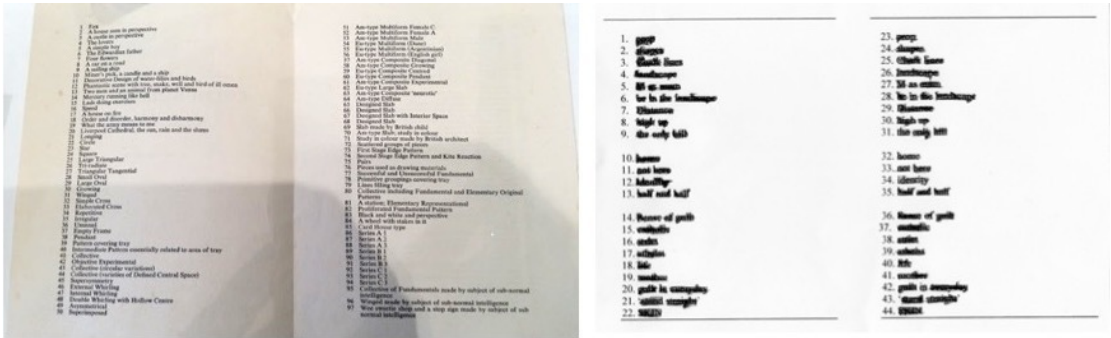


Fig. 16 – (a) Margaret Lowenfeld Test tables titles; (b) Elena Cogni, Making notes of the untold, 2017, biro pen on inkjet print.



investigation, as detailed below. This decision was based on my own position, having recorded the conversations for the purpose of my research, I started listening back to them and realised the deep level of introspection the process of sharing one's 'autobiographical insideness'<sup>117</sup> had allowed. Many very personal details, and emotions surfaced: this was not a staged event, nor a performative intervention, it was a real shared experience where both the participant and myself were involved and witnessed of each other's moments of realisation. The experience was based on trust,<sup>118</sup> as it would be in any caring relations.<sup>119</sup> So, I decided I would not use it in ways in which it might betray that trust.

Inevitably the conversation produced many different responses, most of which would come from the participants' memory of their own family home and their own childhood. As it went on, it was very clear to me that, even though the starting point of the exchange was their children's school run, for the participants this was an opportunity to reflect on their own experience of place in their childhood in relation to their own parents.

Susan Golombok, Director of the Centre for Family Research in Cambridge, in one of our conversations suggested that a strong correlation exists between the way in which a mother experiences her attachment to her mother, and the way in which she affects the attachment of her own children. This is what Brazelton and Cramer define as "imaginary interactions,"<sup>120</sup> which is discussed through the example of a mother's difficult relationship with her own mother, and how this is replayed with her own child. Such dynamic is also part of the attachment behavioural system, "which refers to an organized system of behaviours that has a predictable outcome and serves an identifiable biological function."<sup>121</sup> More broadly therefore the attachment theory "is enabled to provide explanations of how a child's experiences with attachment figures come to influence in particular ways the pattern of attachment he develops."<sup>122</sup>

A similar process takes place in how children experience and respond to places through what Degnen defines the 'affordances of place,' that is "the ways in which place is habitually sensed and manoeuvred through and around, becoming 'sedimented' in a habituated body."<sup>123</sup> This process starts in the company of their parents, as place attachment does not only operate at the level of the individual<sup>124</sup> is but deeply social. Jack states that children's independent use of their local environment later in life is

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117. Rowles (1983, p. 303).

118. Annette Baier (1986) is discussed in Virginia Held (2006), in particular her influential essay "Trust and Anti-Trust" appeared in *Ethics* in January 1986; this together with other essays is collected in *Moral Prejudices*.

119. Held (2006).

120. Brazelton, Cramer (1990, p. 151).

121. Cassidy, Jones, Shaver (2013, p. 1416).

122. Bowlby (1969, 1982, pp. 373-374).

123. Degnen (2015, p. 1647).

124. *Ibidem*.

another key ingredient in developing the strength of their place attachments and their feelings of belonging in their local communities.<sup>125</sup>

In my encounters, after the non-verbal phase, the adult would respond to the question 'where is home?' from this newly 'formed,' and tangible perspective. The sculptural prop we had together turned into this context, now had also become a safe space for sharing. The participants would mainly talk about places from memory they regarded as home, and thus fixed in a particular moment in time, underlying how home was referred to as an intangible and transient concept. This newly acquired perspective would thus also include their own evolving experience of place attachment, and they were made aware of it through this project. The impact of this became apparent as Alison, Enrico and Simona said they will possibly, also unconsciously, share it with their children.

The lived and tangible experience of the encounter in that place linked to their relationship with their children, was instrumental in creating a context where the participants felt at ease to re-conceptualize other familiar places in relation to their own parents, which impacted on their own identity formation.

More broadly, this newly acquired awareness of each participant is a seed, and can have an important impact on their wellbeing<sup>126</sup> within their community in the city, and in society at large. Such achievements need to be nurtured.

In the piece 339282.580645 *Barleycorns Away...*, an installation of collages including 88 variations through different measuring systems (Fig. 17), I indicate the specific location one would arrive if walking the distance of circumference of the earth. If one were to walk away from where they were this many Barleycorns, one would come back to the same spot: here and now. This refers to the idea that the 'home' the participants indicated was not a physical location, but an abstract concept instead, and they were reframing it as they spoke. I was a witness of it. 'Home,' they realized, was exactly in the same place they were in the moment of the encounter: they/we carry it with us.

### 3. Caring With and Mothering

*Seeds of Attachment* ultimately points to a wider understanding of the role of *mothering* and the need of caring approaches in society. This is here referred to as motherhood, and while on the one hand it refers to different attachment figures such as biological mothers, adoptive and foster parents, fathers, and those who care for children in general, it also indicates the role of caring in society, as in teaching, and medical and nursing care. These such practices are undervalued, as stated by care ethicists and ecofeminists. To *care with* in dialogic art practice means to adopt an approach where attentiveness, reciprocity, relationality are shared values, but also means to take responsibility by starting

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125. Jack (2010, p. 763).

126. Jack (2010).

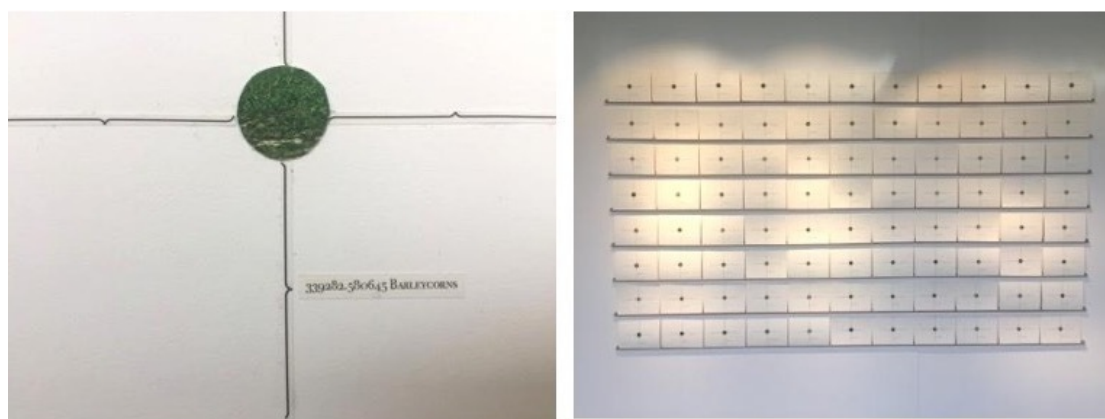


Fig. 17 – (a) Elena Cologni, 339282.580645 *Barleycorns Away...*, 2017, detail and (b) installation, 88 collages on paper, oak, 240 x 150 cm, in the exhibition “...And Encounter,” New Hall Art Collection, University of Cambridge.

from microsocial and everyday life to denounce the lack of those values in our many public policies and institutions.

### 3.1. Motherhood and Art in Context

The documentation and traces of the project in the form of drawings, collages, and constructions were exhibited in a solo show titled “...And Encounter” (2017/18) at New Hall Art Collection, at Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. This was accompanied by a selection of artworks from the collection by Mary Cassatt, Celia Paul, Judith Tucker and Monica Sjoo in the section *Ecofeminism*, curated by Maria Azcoitia and Seanna Wilson and directed by Eliza Gluckman. In a video essay on the research of the project,<sup>127</sup> also exhibited I asked: ‘can dialogics<sup>128</sup> enable the different unification of ecology and feminism that can produce a new perception of the relationship of humanity and world? A very ambitious proposition, this project attempted to practically investigate, by linking ecofeminism<sup>129</sup> and dialogic art, underpinned by care ethics, and looking at practices of care in microsocial and wider contexts.<sup>130</sup>

Eco-feminism as a neologism was conceived by Francoise d’Eubonne in the 1970s to signify the conjoining of radical ecological and feminist thinking in a variety of perspectives which sought to ‘eliminate gender inequalities and hierarchies in a way that

127. [<https://vimeo.com/242746943>].

128. This include an artistic perspective through dialogic art defined by Grant Kester, as above, and the philosophical position defined by Mikail Bakhtin (1986), and Michael Mayerfeld Bell & Michael Gardiner (1998).

129. This include Franca Marcomin and Laura Cima (2017), Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993), Francoise Eaubonne (1974), Agarwal (1992), Agarwal (1994, pp. 81-125).

130. This project speciffally looks at mothering (as in previous project *Balancing*, at Doppelgaenger Gallery, Bari Italy 2014), but my work also points to caring for the vulnerable, health care, caring for the environment.

valued the environment, and articulated parallels between the exploitation of women and the environment.<sup>131</sup> A general premise for ecofeminism is to view particular kinds of masculinist behaviours as destructive towards human and nature, and certain kinds of femininities as caring activities of human and nature.

This position is also shared by Italian activist and politician Laura Cima and midwife Franca Marcomin,<sup>132</sup> which offers an understanding of the political climate during my childhood in Italy, and is also useful in re-examining some of the reasons behind my decision to leave the country in the mid-90s. The book gives an overview of the political context in Italy in which women organised collectively in order to become institutionally represented with the purpose of advancing environmental concerns and policies. It gives a sense of the complexity and importance of such a side-lined aspect of the struggle of women and ecology in the recent history of Italy, while acknowledging that many contributions to what was defined as 'controcultura' (counterculture) came from women based in the global south, such as: Vandana Shiva, Arundathi Roy, Bina Agarwal in India, Shanyasa Khasiani and Esther I. Njiro in Africa.

This project was thus also useful for me to deal with personal experiences of prevarications, now I understand as having been perpetuated with the false pretence to care, while actually having been manifestations of 'uncare.'

The pieces from the collection in the exhibition, presented ideas of motherhood and care in relation to nature as one of the fixed, intrinsic, innate qualities to women, as an essentialist position would entail.<sup>133</sup> However, among different positions in a much debated topic Alaimo states that "ecofeminist activism refutes the blanket condemnation of environmental feminisms as essentialist" to consider ecofeminism as "an engaged mode of theory."<sup>134</sup> Such was also the approach I had adopted in my project exhibited next to those artworks, which was as an attempt to offer another view of motherhood as a role in society challenging what is accepted to 'naturally' be a woman's role. Debate which is at the core of care ethics.

Virginia Held<sup>135</sup> indicates the beginnings of the ethics of care with a pioneering essay called 'Maternal Thinking' by philosopher Sara Ruddick published in 1980.<sup>136</sup> In it, Ruddick attended to the caring practice of mothering, the characteristic and distinctive thinking to which it gives rise, and the standards and values that can be discerned in this practice. According to Held, Ruddick's essay showed how the experience of mothering could have a distinctive moral outlook, and how the values that emerged from within it could be relevant beyond the practice itself, for instance in promoting peace, beyond feminist literature. It showed that attending to the experience of women

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131. Buckingham (2020).

132. Cima, Marcomin (2017).

133. For more on this see for example: Carlassare (2004); Moore (2004); Gaard (2011, pp. 26-53).

134. Alaimo (2008).

135. Held (2006).

136. Ruddick (1980, pp. 342-67).

in a caring practice could change how we think about morality and could change our view of the values appropriate to other caring activities, such as caring for the sick or elderly.

Mothering thus refers to caring practices that extend well beyond the caring that takes place in 'families and among friends, or even in the care institutions of the welfare state, to the social ties that bind groups together, to the bonds on which political and social institutions can be built, and even to the global concerns that citizens of the world can share ideal manifest in activities of care in concrete situations.'<sup>137</sup>

### 3.2. Feminism and *Caring Relations*

My exhibition "...And Encounter," and collection display *Ecofeminism and Caring* were accompanied by the roundtable "Nomadic and Dialogic, Art and Ecofeminism" chaired by Gluckman, with feminist geographer Susan Buckingham and environmentalist and college Fellow Jenny Bavidge, within a discussion on the 'caring' role devalued in neo-liberal societies, and the spatial dimension of dialogue as inter-corporeal space of micropolitics.<sup>138</sup>



Fig. 18 – (a) Curator Eliza Gluckman introducing the roundtable to the participants; (b) selection of participants' notes on the provided outline.

In this, the idea of care underpinning my dialogic approach, was the starting point of the open conversation. Care ethics has been central to the development of feminist ethics and ecofeminism more generally. In a ground-breaking work by psychologist Carol Gilligan, called *In a Different Voice*, published in 1982<sup>139</sup> she theorized that there were different ethical "voices" - the voice of justice and the voice of care. Gilligan suggested that both voices had a place to play in ethics and that the distinction between justice and care refers to the familiar divisions between thinking and feeling, egoism

137. Held (2006, p. 36).

138. An extract of the event can be found at: [<https://vimeo.com/245027829>]. Susan Buckingham also wrote about the project in her book *Gender and the Environment* (2020).

139. Gilligan studied children at play in school grounds and noticed that boys and girls tended to have different ways of formulating play. Boys' games seemed to focus around abstract rules of justice, to which players had to conform, whereas girls' games seemed to concern relationships and the expression (or not) of care.

and altruism, theoretical and practical reasoning. Gilligan states that: "All relationships, public and private can be characterised in terms both of equality and in terms of attachment. And that both inequality and detachment constitute grounds for moral concern."<sup>140</sup>

Philosopher Virginia Held explores how feminist theory is changing contemporary views of moral choice. She proposes a comprehensive philosophy of feminist ethics, arguing persuasively for re-conceptualizations of the self of relations between the self and others.<sup>141</sup> Held explains that practices of care—from mothering to caring for the ill to teaching children to cultivating social relations—have changed a great deal from their earliest forms, but to a significant extent without the appropriate moral theorizing, which care ethics sought to address, as 'the practices themselves already incorporate various values, often unrecognized'<sup>142</sup> in the context of philosophy.

In particular, Held emphasises the relational qualities of the ethics of care, aspect which was of main interest in my own dialogic art practice. In this context, the emotions and relational capabilities as said to enable morally concerned persons in actual interpersonal settings to understand what would be best.<sup>143</sup> Relationality is a fundamental in care ethics and Held refers to other ethicists' relevant ideas. Sara Ruddick sees care as work and writes: "As much as care is labour, it is also relationship...caring labour is intrinsically relational."<sup>144</sup> Peta Bowden considers what she calls an intuition: that caring is ethically important, and that it "expresses ethically significant ways in which we matter to each other, transforming interpersonal relatedness into something beyond ontological necessity or brute survival."<sup>145</sup> To Selma Sevenhuijsen the activity of care is seen as "an ability and a willingness to 'see' and to 'hear' needs, and to take responsibility for these needs being met"<sup>146</sup> as, she states, that in giving and receiving the actual concrete work of care, "the direct interaction takes place in which feelings of self and other and connection between people is expressed."

Held however indicates that, not only the person being cared for has benefits from the care work, but that 'caring is a relation in which carer and cared-for share an interest in their mutual well-being.'<sup>147</sup> So, in her view, this is considered in terms of *caring relations*, as the ethics of care, conceptualizes persons as deeply affected by, and involved in, relations with others. In calling them caring relations, held suggest that 'care [...] can extricate us from the overly personal perspective of the virtue tradition and the excessive contemporary focus on individual psychology at the expense of much else of

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140. Gilligan (1994, p. 262).

141. Held (1993, 2006).

142. Held (2006).

143. Ivi, p. 11.

144. Ruddick (1998, pp. 13-14).

145. Bowden (1997, p. 1).

146. Sevenhuijsen (1998, p. 83); Held (2006, p. 34).

147. Held (2006, p. 35).



value,<sup>148</sup> a focus I argue the wider society would also benefit from.

In the SOA project condition of *being in dialogue with*, refers to an everyday seemingly banal activity, but is at the core of the artistic strategy adopted, and it embeds the attitude to listen and to care. It indicates a form of *caring relation*: of relating to others and the environment we live in, as a form of *caring-with*. Furthermore, it is from the collaboration and interdisciplinary mode of working with others involved, participants, or facilitators that meaning and knowledge are produced. The caring-with strategy was adopted in this project, while investigating place attachment in relation to the attachment between carer and child to point to the how the *mothering* role in society can lead to new possible and more relational ways of conducting our lives.

## 4. Discussion

The title of the exhibition “...And Encounter” is not only a direct reference to the last term of Seamon’s triad: movement, rest and encounter, it also points to the very nature of dialogic art: that of being based on encounters between people, and with place.

In the context of understanding how one relates to place in a non-verbal way I became interested in what prompts us to react to and interact at a physical level and in relation to place. More specifically how this interconnection with one another and place, is at the centre of a caring, and a mothering approach to life. This is to be understood at a wider level in society and politics to reconsider the way in which we live. In the everyday experience of place this new approach can start from becoming more aware of our surroundings, to heighten an attentiveness to rhythms of movement rest and encounter, which create place attachment and belonging.

I have become increasingly more interested in James and Eleanor Gibson and their concept of *affordances*, here discussed through Degnen’ position on place attachment. By way of understanding how the perception of the environment inevitably leads to some course of action the term *affordance* was created by James Gibson,<sup>149</sup> to indicate a complementarity between animal and man with the environment, and imply an unfinished possibility.

Since the late modern/post-modern world, tradition no longer defines the individual, furthermore we witness a huge wave of migration generated by climate crisis, war and a changing economy. This requires people to constantly re-create their roles and personal identities through reflexive processes of dynamic interaction between themselves and

148. Held (2006) also refers to the concept of Diana Meyers “The feminist relational self,” she writes: “is the interpersonally bonded self... As relational selves... people share in one another’s joys and sorrows, give and receive care, and generally profit from the many rewards and cope with the many aggravations of friendship, family membership, religious or ethnic affiliation, and the like. These relationships are sources of moral identity, for people become committed to their intimates and to others whom they care about, and these commitments become central moral concern.” In Meyers D. (2004, p. 292).

149. Gibson (1979).



the society in which they live.<sup>150</sup> Within this scenario it seems to me that to become aware of how we relate to places and one's own sense of belonging, could also provide valuable tools to be able to deal with risks and uncertainties for individuals. Jack's considers some of the ways that the place attachments of all children and young people, as well as of those in the care system who have experienced significant dislocations, can be promoted for the benefit of their well-being,<sup>151</sup> and that of their families, I believe art can also help to achieve if embedding principles of co-functioning, connectivity and reciprocity, at the core of the *caring with* art strategy discussed in post-disciplinary terms.

#### 4.1. Towards a Post-Disciplinary Approach in Dialogic Artistic Research

In the project Seeds of Attachment an *art-practice-as-research-as-art*<sup>152</sup> approach is adopted, which functions as a generative research tool, within which the art practice is the site for testing paradigms of knowledges (Lowenfeld, Seamon, Held), while offering an artistic dialogic context for a new artist/participant shared experience of place and self.

If scientific and social research's validity is intrinsically linked to the replicability of the found paradigm, artistic research, due to its subjective nature is not. Subjectivity is also at the core of care ethics and ecofeminist approaches<sup>153</sup> underpinning this project. Artistic research and the creative process evolve according to different, sometimes paradoxical parameters, and its validity is linked to its social, political and cultural context, and of course peer recognition.<sup>154</sup>

Dialogic artistic research in particular is inherently interdisciplinary, littoral (Kester) and collaborative, and within its methodology design a number of variants are considered to allow its significance and new knowledge to arise.<sup>155</sup> In the discussed project, art not only functions in an in(ter)disciplinary<sup>156</sup> way by breaking through the boundaries of disciplines, but also proposes a post-disciplinary<sup>157</sup> direction. This is emerging as being porous, indeterminate, a hybrid, which similarly refuses to accept hierarchies

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150. Giddens (1990, 1991).

151. Jacks (2010).

152. This epistemological framework for artistic research was presented within the context of international debate on the Subject, I have been active since I enrolled in a PhD at the University of the Arts London (1998), winning one of the first 5 scholarships for artists in the University. Publications include: Cologni 2018, Cologni 2016, Cologni 2010, Cologni 2009, Cologni 2006, Cologni 2000. This paradigm is part of an ongoing debate on artistic research and education is now very lively and well established in the UK, Europe, through networks, conferences and fora, including the Artistic Research Network (EU), Paradox Network (EU), ELIA and Colleges of Art Association (US).

153. King (1991).

154. Borgdorff (2007).

155. Original citation & hyperlink: Hammersley J. and Knowles R. (2016). "The Dialogic: art work as method," National Association of Fine Art Educators (NAFAE) Fine Art Research Network Symposium, 15 July 2016, Cumbria UK: [<http://www.nafae.org.uk/events/research-practice-practice-research>]

156. Rancière (2009); Cologni (2018).

157. Pernecky (2020).

of knowledge, and the boundaries these impose. Feminist theory has already pointed out that, if the disciplinary space is defined as autonomous and ahistorical, then the social relations of power and dominance that are inherent in that space remain unacknowledged (2001).

In the project, driven by everyday life experience of place, the research questions are drawn from psychology, ethics and human geography, but these are understood through the art context. In particular, the artistic non-verbal dialogic approach *caring-with* adopted here, was inspired by the method adopted by Margaret Lowenfeld. The sculptural prop, just like the Lowenfeld's mosaic tiles, is not only an icebreaker for communication, but the very context where communication/dialogue/answers takes place, and *shape*. Moreover, in this process the relation between this artist/this participant and this place is crucial to its results and interpretation. A reciprocal exchange takes place, where the care relations are central both practically and conceptually.

I discussed how the artistic approach I developed here has evolved from embedding Reciprocal Maieutics,<sup>158</sup> and resulted in the sculpture *Untitled (prop, Seeds of Attachment)* illustrated here, which was being adopted as a tool in the engagement. In this process, background motives, and narrative are specific to those involved. These conditions are everchanging, and site/community specific, so that taking the prop to a different context will uncover different questions rather than answering them. Such is the nature of art. In this sense, the strategy for engagement and interdisciplinary method can be built on to further impact in society.

This artistic practice as research process, including: research and fieldwork; design and conceptualization of methodology and methods; investigative strategies like workshops; and outcomes in the form of diagrams, objects, drawings and texts are all manifestation of the artistic practice. During this collaborative process thus defined of *Art Practice as Research as Art* the knowledge is socially produced, and is also situated.

Situated knowledge<sup>159</sup> has been defined within scientific research, but there is little published of it in relation to art.<sup>160</sup> To be understood within standpoint theory,<sup>161</sup> situated knowledge seeks to develop a particular feminist epistemology, that values the experiences of women and minorities as a source for knowledge.<sup>162</sup> Feminist stand-

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158. Dolci (1973); Cologni (2016).

159. Haraway (1988).

160. "Thinking with art: from situated knowledge to experiential knowing," Ian Sutherland & Sophia Krzys Acord, in *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 6, 2, 2007, they claim that "understanding knowledge as action best frames the future of public engagement with creative practice, social structures and cultural forms."

161. Hartsock (1983).

162. Nancy Hartsock examined standpoint theory by using relations between men and women. She published *The Feminist Standpoint: Developing Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism* in 1983. Standpoint theory seeks to develop a particular feminist epistemology, that values the experiences of women and minorities as a source for knowledge, McCann C., Kim S. (2003). *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and global perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

point theorists including Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartsock, and Sandra Harding<sup>163</sup> make three principal claims that: knowledge is socially situated; marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that makes it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized; research focused on power relations, should begin with the lives of the marginalized.<sup>164</sup> Thus, post-disciplinarity is emerging here in the context of an evolving cultural narrative in which the notion of situated knowledge is emphasised.

## Conclusion

This account illustrates the development of a project which highlights the relational nature of life, while asking where home might be. This has become a problematic notion, as due to the pandemic since late 2019, our habits have been put on hold. For those of us with a home to self-isolate, this means travelling less and having to pause from the rhythms we were used to before. Even the school run, subject of Seeds of Attachment, is now a memory. But for those who can only remember of a home, and who left their country of origin in which they grew up, because they were threatened, in the hope of a new life they might have not yet found, this is much more distressing time.

This is when the feelings of place attachment and belonging, become practical necessities for wellbeing. This is when care is to be understood as medical care, as well social care. When at home our roles of care include that of teaching, nurturing, cleaning, on top of working, and when compassion, empathy, collaboration and cooperation show us a way to face the difficulties. The ways in which one experiences place, starting from home, impacts one's own identity, and is central to one's own wellbeing.

The Margaret Lowenfeld's *Mosaic Test Box* was developed since 1938, during a historical difficult time and was used to heal those traumatized after the second world war. However, the difficult times we find ourselves in now are not comparable to a war. The pandemic is one of the consequences of a culture of 'uncare' perpetrated at different levels in society, and by the very institutions supposed to protect us.

Art cannot directly cure illnesses such as the one we are Fighting today, but can open up conversations and questions about our attitudes to care for one another, our places and the environment 'so that we can live in it as well as possible.'<sup>165</sup> Such a relational approach of caring would also imply that it extends to towards future generations as well. 'The ethics of care' Held argues 'requires not only the revision of the social contract so that it adequately addresses the needs and concerns of care. It requires the reevaluation

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163. They claimed that certain socio-political positions occupied by women (and by extension other groups who lack social and economic privilege) can become sites of epistemic privilege and thus productive starting points for enquiry into questions about not only those who are socially and politically marginalized, but also those who, by dint of social and political privilege, occupy the positions of oppressors. This claim was specifically generated by Sandra Harding.

164. Griffin (2009).

165. Fisher, Tronto (1990).

of the social contract altogether: its central place in our political and social theorizing, and in society.’<sup>166</sup>

Seeds of Attachment responds to place, and is concerned with the ways in which we locate ourselves however temporarily within it. Practices of care in society, including taking care of children, central to Seeds of Attachment are generally undervalued and considered peripheral, but placing them at the centre of society, as this project seeks to do through the *caring-with* approach, represents a proposition for change that would affect the context well beyond artistic research. This could be a possible contribution to tracing a wider *geography of difference through caring*.

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